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CONTACTS

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1996 SYDNEY GAY & LESBIAN MARDI GRAS

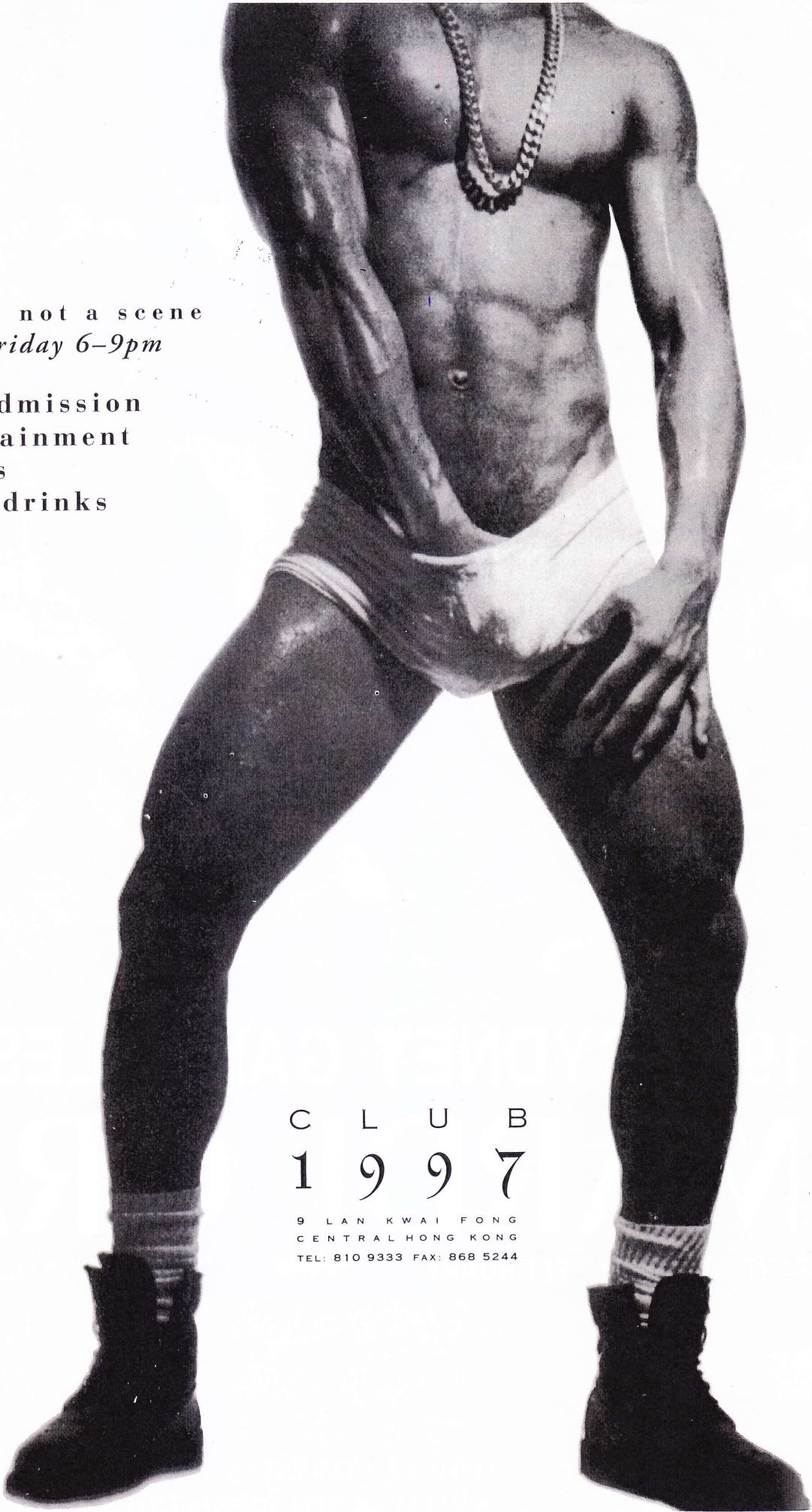
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Hong Kong is in the process of considering a Equal Rights Ordinance for Gays.

A new group, the Coalition of Gay Groups, has been formed and we have joined it. We try never to miss an opportunity to speak out on Gay Rights. we write letters and articles to the newspapers. The local TV and radio stations broadcast interviews (infrequently) from the public on the subject of Gay Rights. Naturally we put in our two cents worth.

It just seemed that for so long Gays had been made to feel bad about being Gay that now we practically dare anybody to try that again! We could go a bit over board: but we would soon approach burn-out.

Yes...

But if it wasn't for this overboard reaction, where would the Equal Rights movement be today? It is coming along at a rapid pace not just because of a few special interest groups...but because of people – ordinary people like you, me, and all those other Gay & Lesbian pissed off people who refuse to hide any more. It is these motivated few everywhere that continues to be the driving force, grassroots efforts. The home stuff.. that is really where the battles are taking place and it is where we will win.

We admit, we have from time to time, approached burn-out...but it has been three great years of being out, loud, and proud. We're ready to let others start picking up some of the effort. It really does feel incredible to just be us....no charades, no hidden agendas, no dropping pronouns, no pretending.....

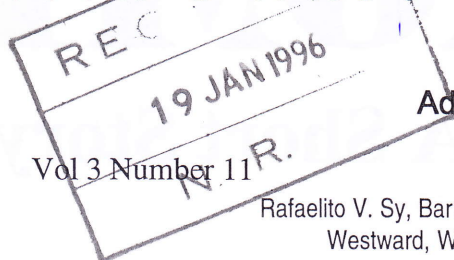
NO...

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Front Cover: Let's Mardi Gras!

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THE PROMISE

A Short Story

By *Rafaelito V. Sy*

"What time are you getting up?"

"9:00," he answered, his back to me and the pillow muffling his voice. "Do you have to get going now?"

"Yes...I have my laundry to do."

He lay motionless.

Just when I thought he had fallen back to sleep, he mumbled something inaudible and clambered out of bed. "I'll give you my phone number," his voice louder. "Don't hesitate to call."

My eyes followed him to the writing desk, as I put on my red tee-shirt, which only last night he said reminded him of a Chinese boy he had in London. Thirty-eight this man was. Against the fresh rays of the Parisian sun his curls turned a grayish hue and his chest adapted a suppleness deceiving of the hard muscle that shaped it.

He claimed not to have worked out for weeks, inadvertently putting my youthful body to shame. A workout entailed the usual lifting of weights. For diversity he would ski and swim, while in his younger days he played soccer. In bold letters he wrote his name on a sheet of paper, reciting his phone number to me at the same time.

"Promise you'll call."

"I will," I said.

"I promise," I said.

His bare ass led me to the front door. He could not keep his balance on the reclining floor of the hallway, learning his hands on the walls flanking him to support him-

self. A little tired. A little dazed. A little too much to drink.

"I'll hear from you."

"Yes," I assured him. "I promise."

With a kiss we parted.

Down the carpeted stairs I trodded, dazed as well but not under the influence. The latch to the entrance door of the townhouse was tightly hooked, forcing me to struggle for a minute or two. I couldn't figure out if I had to open it by key or if I needed to press a button on the wall to unhook it.

He would know, I thought, and I had an impulse to return to his home which for ten fleeting hours was mine too. It was just a passing impulse. I struggled, alone, so that he could sleep peacefully on his king size bed till 9:00, undisturbed by my petty problem, and alone. In no time the latch easily slid loose and the heavy wooden door creaked open.

The plaza which the townhouse framed had changed since last night. It was empty as it had been under the moon, yet the air lacked the same serene stillness that only night rendered. The glaring metal head of an equestrian statue rising at its center was enticing pigeons. They flocked in pairs, in groups. A trail of people would soon tag at their tail, and they would stare at the equestrian in awe, at its beaconing light, enticed.

Along the column lined walkway of the townhouse, two artists had already set up easels with their works on display, no doubt competing with the painting hanging in exhibition at the galleries beside them. A third was setting up her easel. Then there would be a fourth, and a fifth. There would be some music as well, a

string quartet strumming melodic tunes, a miniature jazz band trumpeting bopping notes. It was day. Life had begun again.

Every display window I passed along the walkway faintly mirrored my image. I stopped in front of an antique store and I examined my ambiguous reflection superimposed on a shelf of fading book binds, the sheet of paper with his number in hand. In an anxious effort to explain last night, I searched for traces of manly endowment that would make my body compatible with his.

Pretty boys paraded in the seedy video arcade. Their affected aloofness shone through the dimness of the light. Pretty boys all perfect prey for his lair were waiting for him to prowl on them. Me, despite all of them and their beauty, he chose to entice.

In a dark booth, he slobbered me with kisses that brought me to my knees. My mouth admired his strength; my fingers crawled into his crevice. This homage that I offered brought him, too, to his knees. He stooped so low that we was panting a desperate pant, hungry for me. "Come with me," he whispered.

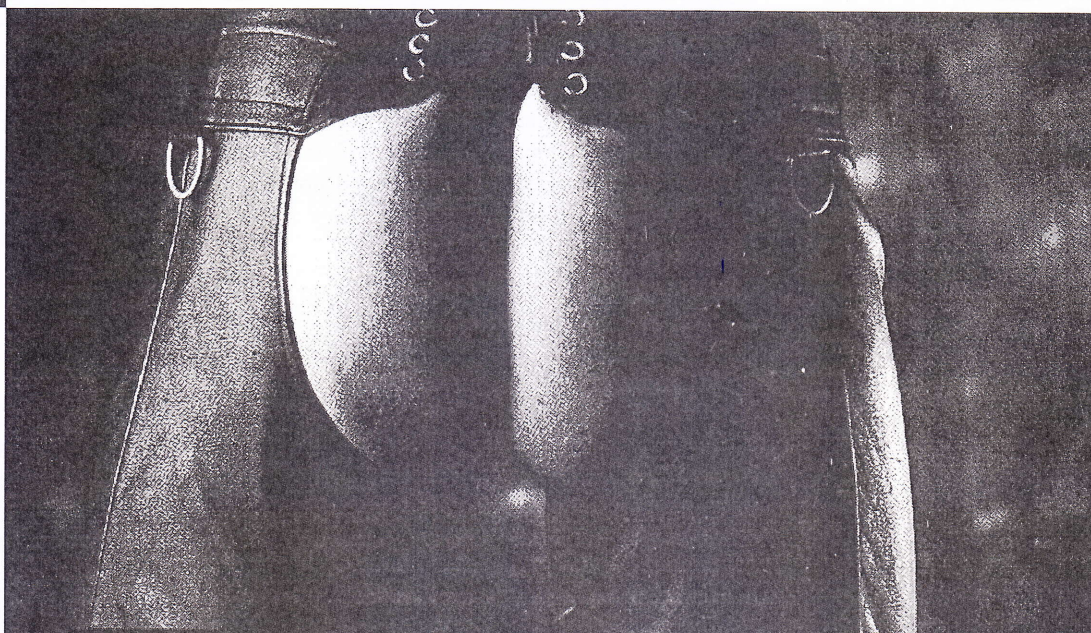
"I'll do what you want."

My reflection dwindled as the store lights illuminated the books; not only were they fading into grayness, they were also tearing at the seams. Away from the walkway I headed. I retraced the path we took to his home, walking the opposite direction my way out. Each step, the immediate past, a force of its own, fell on me with a frightening accuracy.

Night overtook the passing scenery surrounding me; it summoned forth the serene stillness. His voice sounded in my

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head, calm and smooth, marked by a lack of inhibition to speak so precious among men of his kind. I myself became uninhibited with my soul.

Up the stairs he guided me, past the front door, through a narrow hallway at the end of which a lavishly spacious living room emerged overlooking the square. The evening breeze brushed his hair as he held my hand and led me to the window.

Shutters folded back, it ran the length of the wall and revealed under the starless sky an angle of the equestrian statue I once believed impossible to view. I was a bird hovering about it, above its triumphant sneer and proud head, him by my side extending his welcoming arms as I entered a higher sphere of masculine vigor and beauty.

He kissed me, a kiss less sloppy than the first. He undressed me with a seductive slowness a I did him. In an embrace our limbs intertwined like vines crawling up a fence of lattice. We exposed our naked bodies in front of the window shamelessly, uncaring of the speculative eyes the might pass below us, while from the same glass we sipped gin and savored the aftertaste in each other's mouth.

He turned around, pressed his back against my eager front. My spider like fingers crept up the massive wall of his back, five rolling under his shoulder, five sneaking around his waist to feel him grow from infancy to manhood. When he faced me his hands encircled my neck as bolts to a screw, firm yearning hands, in raising my head to join our lips once more.

Then came bed. And the stretching pain that softened him, then me, a flower fragile yet flourishing in his protective arms. In this union our vulgar twaddle exceeded the boundary of lust and took a meaning comprehensible only in my dreams. With our last words he cradled my head no his chest. I sucked his nipples, and I sucked.

Lower down him I went, to allow the nurturing warmth from his body to flow into me and carry us both away into the sleepy silence filtering the air. At dusk we awoke. Scenes from the night before we replayed, again and again, our sensations unedited, until twilight slipped into the living room window to invade our private realm.

From the park where I was standing, the equestrian's sun-veiled head concealed part of the window, still open just as when it served as my eyepiece to the world I

was now returning to. The shadow of myself continued to linger there. Then with the darkness of the apartment it merged; it disintegrated into nothing. Laughter. Songs. Screams of children.

I was suddenly amidst all that, lost within the gathering of families and friends, displaced among a flood of lovers. There were lovers everywhere, and they everywhere in Paris. I could tell they were lovers by their gait, their easy steps and their calculated distance to the mayhem that was twirling around them, by their gaze which bound them together stronger than two clutched hands forever.

These happy people were scattering bread crumbs to the ground, luring the pigeons to descend from the equestrian to their feet. Sporadically, swiftly, the pigeons pecked at their food while moving in dizzying circles to the amusement of their spectators. I tore pieces from the sheet in my hand, ripping apart fragments of his number. The four, the three, the zero, the six crumbled to my feet for them to salvage with their beaks, before they soared back to the sky where they belonged.

Passport Magazine



Australia

The state police in Australia's New South Wales have issued a groundbreaking plan on policing of 'beats', semi-public places such as toilets and parks where men meet men for sex. ". Evidence suggests police may be faced with allegations of entrapment and acting as an agent provocateur, when an arrest has been made of a person who claims they have been encouraged to make a sexual advance to the arresting plainclothes officer." Commissioner A. R. Lauer ordered that all police officers be "clearly instructed not to incite or encourage any person to engage in unlawful behaviour."

Belgium

John Stamford, aged 56, Co-founder of the Gay Guide, Spartacus, died on the 29th December 1995. Stamford who was forced to flee Britain 15 years ago to avoid prosecution as a pedophile died of a heart attack.

Denmark

The annual Euro-Pride celebration moves to Copenhagen in 1996, hosted by the Copenhagen Pride Association and supported with an approximately \$200,000 subsidy from the city. Scheduled for June 21-30, the events include art and photography exhibits; festivals of film, dance and singing; numerous parties; a huge parade (June 29 from 9:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m.); and the conversion of one of Copenhagen's main squares into a Gay village called "Pride Town." Parade organisers say they will break two world records: longest fireworks display and "longest discotheque."

India

A majority of women in 11 of India's 13 states have never heard of AIDS, the new National Family Health Survey has found. Only eight percent of respondents in the state of Assam were familiar with the disease. This and other factors lead Indian health officials to predict five million HIV infections by the year 2000, up from the current 1.5 million.

New Zealand

A rise in the incidence of Hepatitis A in Wellington among Gay men has prompted health officials to plan a campaign to prevent its spread. New Zealand AIDS Foundation and Capital Coast Health have launched the 'Cover your arse' campaign aimed at Gay men. Auckland earlier this year had a huge rise in the incidence of Hepatitis A.

South Africa

Gays should be allowed in the South African military because the nation's new constitution bans discrimination based on sexual orientation, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) said Nov. 28. South Africa is the only country in the world which has Gay protections built into its constitution. The National Party (NP), which ruled under apartheid, disapproved of the ANC's proposal, saying open homosexuality would undermine military effectiveness. "Free sexual activity is detrimental to military discipline," NP Senator. Mark Wiley alleged.

UK

Gay activists plan to proclaim an independent republic on a small island off the coast of Devon, England, to protest against British immigration's restrictive refugee laws. Peter Tatchell, spokesman for the London activist group OutRage!, said Gays will occupy the island of Lundy, population 12, for one week and erect the Gay flag, print Gay money and issue Gay marriage licenses. OutRage! spent twenty five thousand pounds (approximately HK\$300,000) to rent every available building on the island for the week.

Vatican

The Vatican has put out a new sex education guide for parents that says that safe sex is "immoral and dangerous policy." The handbook notes, "Without wanting to take away from them their rightful autonomy, parents must know how to say 'no' to their children when it is necessary." The 60-page book, which was compiled by the Pontifical Council for the Family, implores parents to keep children away from society's "negative influences" and "banalisation of sex" by teaching sex education at home. The Vatican also restated Pope John Paul's thoughts on AIDS. "Parents must refute the promotion of so-called 'safe sex' or 'safer sex,' a dangerous and immoral policy, based on the illusory theory that a condom can provide sufficient protection against AIDS," the guide said.

OOG

ORIENTAL GUYS
ISSUE NO. 15

HK\$320

SRI LANKA:
Heaven on Earth?

VIETNAM'S
AIDS ILLUSION

TRANYS &
DRAG QUEENS
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Out about

f i f i

Have you met Fifi yet? If you haven't then your 'coming out' isn't complete! Make the time to meet Hong Kong's favourite (known to many as royal) drag queen...every 3rd Friday of the month at Club 97 during happy hour. Fifi is more than happy to autograph copies of Contacts Magazine. All moneys raised go to the Coalition of Gay Groups (CoGG).

Please Note...

As Lunar New Year is later this year we will have the next great issue of Contacts Magazine out on the 15th February. Please help us by getting all stories, articles and adverts to GPO Box 13427 Hong Kong by the 1st February. Thanks!



Y e a h ,

S u r e

"I am confident that all the staff in (sic) the service centre will commit ourselves as much as all the volunteers do...Let's join hands and witness the growth of AIDS Concern."

Bella Luk Executive Administrator

AIDS Concern Annual Report 1994/95.

Surely retrograde steps? Shouldn't the paid staff be ahead of, and guiding the volunteers? If any AIDS group grows it will be due to the disease affecting more and more people. We thought the whole purpose was to educate people so that the need for voluntary groups decreases.

B L U E B L O O D The newest and largest 'fitness' club in Tsim Sha Tsui. It's a well appointed place that has yet to prove its' popularity with the in-crowd. Blue Blood can be found on the 3/F Perfect Commercial Building, 20 Austin Avenue, TST. Telephone 2302 0780.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Quote of the Month "Homosexuality is an abomination. The practices of these people is appalling. Many of those people involved with Adolf Hitler were Satanists; many of them were homosexuals. The two things seem to go together. ... It is a pathology, it is a sickness."

US Televangelist-politician
Pat Robertson.

Wanna Party?



to where it looks like it'll be happening in '96.

A party a week keeps you fit, seems to be the New Year resolution of CE Top. With parties planned for EVERY Sunday of the month there's bound to be something for everyone. The first Sunday is BBQ and Gay Dance Party. The second is Live Singing and Dance Party. The third is Games and Gay Dance Party and the fourth Sunday is the Sexy Gay Dance Party. All the parties are for Gays ONLY and start at 6.00 so you have plenty of time to recover from Saturday night before getting on down

Velvet is the name of a very upmarket and stylish Karaoke bar in Gloucester Road, Causeway Bay. Rumours have it that it's frequented by the movie crowd so expect prices to be steep – if you can get in. Apparently if the door keeper/bouncer doesn't like the look of you or the way you're dressed your chances of gaining entry are, at best, zero.

Q

said by some to stand for Queer, 97's new flagship restaurant in Quarry Bay opened to a blaze of quiet publicity last month. (Seems that it might stand for Quarry)...anyway as we were saying, blaze of quiet publicity? Isn't that a contradiction in terms? The tastefully minimalist decoration while not appealing to everyone certainly is functional and comfortable...and the pasta is to die for. The telephone number for reservations 2960 0994

One of the many questions that are repeatedly asked is why do so many Gay people (in this instance Gay men), get married?

By Barrie Brandon

I know, from my time working with the London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard, of hundreds of older gay men and lesbians who were, at some time in their life, married and were not open about it to their spouse, who now are in committed Gay relationships, and have been faithful for many years.

There are, I think several reasons why people choose to get married and live a daily lie. Foremost, certainly in Hong Kong, is the ever present family, nuclear and extended, who put pressure on the single person, usually in their late twenties or early thirties to get married and settle down. To conform to society is still, for a Gay person, a dangerous temptation. Another reason is that some people think that by getting married they can change. They think they can bury their true selves and become heterosexual.

Several Gay people, I know—men and women—have taken a partner of the opposite sex to their family homes simply to allay suspicion that they might be Gay. Whilst I do not support this approach it is at least understandable.

Over the past few months I have talked to a number of Gay men about their partners who are Gay or about themselves having been married. This is their story, names and other detail been changed at their request.

John, a New York educated 27 year old local Chinese, told me, "I felt cold and lonely. I needed someone to talk to, someone who is either married and secretly gay or someone who is seeing a married man."

"Over and over Don (who is a 43 year old British ex-pat) repeated to me how he hated lying. Once he talked about his greatest sin. I was scared, I was so scared that he was going to say his Gay feelings. It's sort of ironic, but I was so relieved when he said his greatest sin is adultery. He's Catholic remember. He doesn't have a problem with his Gay side. He hated lying. He didn't want to hide this part of his life from her, but he was too afraid to tell her. So, he simply let her find the phone bill."

"I don't intend to defend his actions. I just wanted you to know, I believe, he did the best he could. And I believe, if circumstances were different, and he became my lover, I could trust him, completely."

John went onto say "I think he's almost perfect. He was thoughtful, fun, kind, and had such a great smile. He seemed very con-

siderate to me. Now, his wife has found out and we're not even allowed to speak to each other until she decides what she wants to do. I know, she will eventually forgive him and they will live the rest of their lives as happily as they can together, quietly discarding his desires."

But could he possibly be thoughtful and considerate if he had been lying to his wife? I have been approached by married men many times and my first question is always: "does your wife know?"

A good friend of mine did his Master thesis in clinical psychology, in America, on married gay men. It is clear, from his research, that those who can't be honest to their wives are not likely to be, at a later time, honest and committed to their lovers.

Charles, a 32 year old Canadian and a married Gay man said "I got married after college, as I was going into the Army, mainly because I wanted to deny that part of myself. It was a safe and 'normal' thing to do."

"After two years of remaining monogamous to my wife, I began straying. During the remaining eight years of our marriage, I lived two separate and distinct lives, and that is how I treated them."

"Physically and emotionally, I needed the sexual pleasure with another man. I always had safer sex, and my wife was never really affected in any way. In addition, however, I did not feel completely satisfied in a relationship with a woman."

As a man who is in the process of divorce after a 16-year marriage and two years of separation Gary ought to understand what life for married Gays is like. He said "It's not an easy road to be on. I know there are a lot of us around who have been involved with women and eventually struggle to an understanding that we really belong with men."

The decisive phase in my coming out and separation came from a brief affair with a married man—in my case, however, he was married to the Church; he's a Roman Catholic priest. We spent some wonderful time together but after a couple of months it was clear that he was not available for the kind of free, open-ended relationship I wanted. At first I was upset and felt cheated, but with time I gained a different perspective. We've been able to continue as friends, sharing our warm memories and maintaining interest in each other's welfare."

There may come a point in the future in which you get together, but he (the married man) is going to have to free himself from his current situation if you are hoping for anything more than being someone's 'spare part.'

You deserve to have someone treat you as their number one priority and being married to a woman, by definition, makes her the number one priority. My advice is usually the same: you ought to get out and find someone who is free and willing to put you first. There is no reason in the world you should accept anything less.

You don't need to be alone

你並不孤獨



Call a friend ... 找你的朋友 . . .

2513 0513 and share our care and support

來分享我們的關注與支持，不用躊躇，即電25130513

我們會聆聽你的擔憂和解答你的疑問，而且所有在愛滋病熱線內傾談的內容絕對保密，包括閣下的身份。同樣，我們可以安排閣下做抗體測試，使閣下明白自己的HIV情況，如閣下是愛滋病帶菌／病患者更可參加我們的支持小組，使用我們的活動中心，還可收到Positive Link newsletter及PWA指南一書，我們會陪伴著你，去醫院或到住所探望你，假如閣下有需要申請援助金，我們可以為你申請。

你是絕對有權利享受美好人生，愛滋基金會永遠在你左右相陪，現在便致電我們的愛滋病熱線。

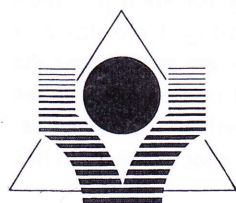
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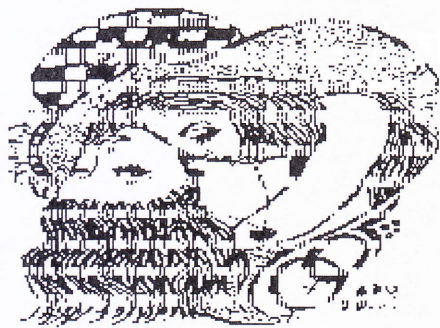
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IS THERE SEX AFTER Lesbianism



By Helen Sheehy

Since this article is to be about sex and our honest opinions on this thorny question, I started with a thought provoking title. I want to explore the thoughts and feelings of many years of Lesbian experience. Yes, I am quite old, interlaced with the experiences of my friends and consciousness raising group experiences. The last statement dates me somewhat! The reason for the anonymous signature is that by talking about sex one is always talking about one's fantasies or masturbation. Whilst I have no objection to revealing my own history I do not have the right to reveal that of others. Nor do I want former lovers, although there are not so many, feeling exposed and hurt, when what I say may not be about them, but rather what someone has told me.

The young dyke

The teenage dyke has I believe more difficulties with sex than older women believe. All of the usual pressures of the teen years are there, the desire to belong to a group, to distance one's self from parents and other authority figures, the confusions about feelings and the strong and sometimes short lived passions. On top of all this are the sometimes strict codes of Lesbian scene she will have to negotiate her relationships in the almost full glare of the community, a community of women of all ages. Many of course are no different to those authority figures and mothers that she perhaps would rather not see her ups and downs.

One answer is to retreat into a young dyke only world or to slip back and forth be

tween the hetero and Lesbian world. Meanwhile her hetero peers are telling each other their problems with their men and getting impartial support and advice. If she does this with her peers they are likely to take sides or even become her lover's next lover! Experimentation is often common gossip and has to be lived with forever rather than left behind with the partner and recalled only when one wants to.

Since so many female children and young women have suffered from some form of sexual abuse the Lesbian is very likely to be or encounter a partner with problems as a result of this. At this age one does not have the resources and skills to deal with these problems even if one recognises them and wants to help. Early sexual experiences often awaken sleeping fears and anxieties. Feeling aggressive during sex, fears of manual or oral sex and particularly penetration with fingers, are very common. They are likely to result in feelings of sexual inadequacy or doubts about one's Lesbianism. In addition the crying need many women have for love and sexual fulfilment become tangled up with these problems causing many difficulties. The hetero can blame the male and be consoled by sympathetic friends. The Lesbian must be careful who she blames and so often blames herself.

A strong desire to belong and to be up to date, as well as the normal rebellious feelings can lead to sexual experimentation that is modelled on the male gay and het

erosexual world, especially since the world of Lesbian sex is not easily available in film, books and similar media. I believe older Lesbians must be understanding and tolerant, providing a supportive, honest and confidential ear when consulted, but mostly minding our own business while young Lesbians forge new sexual relations and politics. By this I do not mean that debate is not engaged in, but as part of a broader Lesbian movement not from a great height.

The middle years 20-35

This is an enormous chunk of our adult lives and does somewhat overlap with the young dyke years, depending on the particular women. The problems and joys of sex are experienced strongly in these years. After all these are the most active sexual years. This then is the first problem. If one is not sexually active due to lack of interest, to recuperate from a broken relationship or reasons not clear to oneself, one can feel extremely left out. Whilst others are indulging in great passions, polygamy or numerous one night stands the celibate often feel inadequate. Yes there has been a lot written about the virtues of celibacy, but being regularly without a partner can cause stress. Some of the sexual problems of youth that have not been solved become more fixed. The number of women seeking feminist therapy for such problems appears to be increasing. I see this as a good sign in that we are recognising the problems. I am not convinced that the therapy very often solves the sexual aspects since there are a lot of things to talk

about in a relationship and precise sexual problems are easy to avoid.

One problem experienced in my own middle years and shared by friends was that of sexual frequency. Factors such as work, health and other factors in the relationship of course play a significant part in frequency. However, women do have different levels of sexual desire. When these are too widely spaced many of the relationships flounder. It is hard enough for a woman to state her sexual needs and then to tell her lover she "isn't getting enough sex" becomes more difficult. Women have been accused of being genially obsessed, behaving like a man, or too demanding. Their partner in her turn feels under pressure to perform and naturally becomes angry and sad about the situation. I can recall discussions about how often was it reasonable to expect sex in a long term relationship. I do not recall any consensus! It was even accepted that some women may have only a "romantic friendship" to coin a term.

My own opinion is that if one partner is unsatisfied and both have tried to achieve some sort of compromise then the relationship probably will not last. The compromise is the issue. From experience it seems that one partner, usually the more sexually active one, makes most of the compromises. After all she has more to lose. Often her partner has good reasons for not wanting much sex. It is there if she feels like it. There is no pressing need to solve the health, work or motivational problems that limit her desire. It is easier to reduce sexual desire and harder to build it up. This feature of Lesbian relationships is often called "bed death". It is more common amongst Lesbians than gay men and heterosexuals, whether we like it or not. It is this problem that has also led to an upsurge of interest in S and M and so called Lesbian erotica.

Of course frequency is not the only issue but what form the sexual contact takes. Learning techniques for making love is not in my view a mechanical unloving way to relate. I love to have dinner and particularly romantic dinners cooked for a lover. I have never been accused of being mechanical if I include my lover's favourite foods and wine, set to a backdrop of her favourite music. But I have been accused of being a bit mechanical if I suggest a romantic setting, some appropriate music

and favourite touching, to a lover who had lost sexual interest.

Good sex in my view requires lots of preparation, commitment on both parts to the experience and sensitivity to each other's needs. Unlike preparing a meal, there is no washing up afterwards, just luscious lying in each other's arms.

The middle years are also those of serial monogamy and trials of serious multiple relationships. These issues need a lot of exploration as I have seen some very good attempts to work on these issues and for some years success. Jealousy and insecurity as well as having the time for more than one lover seem to always get in the way.

One night stands also need a small book to be written about them. The idea that one

Fortunately I have come to terms with my sexual needs not being as strong as in my middle years.

can fall into bed, or somewhere else of course, with someone one has just met and walk away with just a pleasant memory, is a great inducement for those of us who need a sexual experience but are not in a relationship. It does happen, but I know of very few cases. Most of my own one night stands have been with women I knew. Some were friends, or women who wanted a relationship with me, and saw this as the beginning. One does not usually check out on the first night together where you both think this is going. After the night which was rarely that exciting, mainly due to our untuned bodies, there were various repercussions. Some of the one night stands were also women who I had thought may be further interested, only to find out they were in love with someone else or had a lover.

The middle years often flow into the menopausal and after years with exactly the same sexual problems. If unresolved they tend to consolidate.

The menopausal and post menopausal years

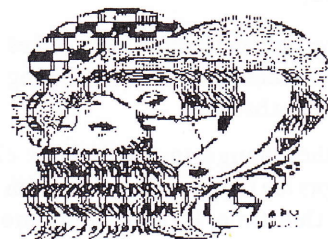
These are of course my own years and I cannot look at them with any clear detach

ment. They are indeed problem years from a sexual point of view. A relationship which has been established for some time can continue to function and deal with the new difficulties that come with a changing body and health. New relationships formed in this time do not have the benefit of years of getting to know each other. They seem to suffer a similar fate to those of the teen years without the faith that things will improve. It becomes harder to find partners since social interests change and energy levels to deal with the ups and downs of relationships as well as the confidence is sometimes greatly reduced. Enforced or voluntary celibacy are very common in this period. Learning to live without a part of one's self can be traumatic. Solutions do not seem as available as for younger women. Even in relationships sexual activity is reduced.

Since women do not experience the menopause at the same time there are support demands from each partner. These often break the relationship if they see the problem as the relationship rather than the menopause. How does one know anyway. This difficult time needs to be mapped out through our writings and discussions. I have only enforced celibacy to offer to the debate. Finding love and compatible sexuality is a hope I have long given up on. Fortunately I have come to terms with my sexual needs not being as strong as in my middle years.

Having been in the vanguard of the feminist movement of the 70's and 80's trying out every form of relationship, even when it did not feel exactly right, but believing in the revolutionary process. I am not sure if I have the energy to do so in my senior years. I hope there are still some brave souls out there who will.

From my own experience I think we must sort out our sexual and relationship problems or at least get them in some perspective, before we reach the menopause. If you find a good relationship work on it and keep it. There aren't women around every corner with whom you can share a meaningful and delicious sexual life.



Just Ignorance

By Jason Leung in London

The way in which Gay people are discriminated against isn't, sometimes, very obvious. It's done by ignoring, omitting and falsifying history and facts so that the straight majority can continue in its belief that they invented, made and accomplished everything ever done that was useful and worthwhile.

Although *Enigma* published by Hutchinson, written by Robert Harris, is a fictional based work it has a factual background.

The story:

March, 1943, and inside Britain's top secret code-breaking centre, Bletchley Park, all hell has broken loose.

Germany's U-boat fleet has unexpectedly changed its cipher for the top-secret Enigma code, thus blacking out the whole of the British intelligence service. A huge merchant shipping convoy is about to leave the United States and the Battle of the Atlantic hangs in the balance.

Enigma is a mix of fact and fiction. In reality, the Enigma code was considered to be unbreakable. Every unit of the German armed forces had an Enigma machine - a device like a typewriter upon which the messages could be decoded.

The codes were changed frequently, thus making the cryptograms harder to read. What the Nazis didn't know is that Bletchley Park had broken it.

Step forward the highly fictional hero Tom Jericho,

Having broken the code once, takes some much needed sick leave, suffering from nervous exhaustion.

But the change in the U-boat cipher prompts the Government to call him back, only this time Jericho finds more in

Bletchley than he bargained for. His girlfriend Claire, "the arctic blonde in Hut 3", is something of an enigma herself. After she fails to turn up for work one day, alarm bells start ringing. Her behaviours in the days before her disappearance leaves Jericho baffled.

When he attempts to discover what has happened to her, he finds himself at the centre of a chain of events with repercussions that go far beyond the bounds of Bletchley.

This is a dingy, depressed, down-at-heel Britain-at-war, where even the walls were said to have ears, it is dangerous to pry too deeply - as Jericho apparently discovers.

In researching the book, Harris interviewed many of the surviving Britons and Americans who worked at the Bletchley Park complex. Many were unwilling to talk, still affected by the Official Secrets Act.

They provided Harris with the details that stamp this novel with the mark of authenticity. Harris was reportedly also helped by the Public Records Office where he found many of the de-coded Enigma signals.

This is a very difficult plot to understand. It would be helpful if you had a degree in, say pure applied maths. Having seen the stage production some years ago in London I think the book will, for most of us, be boring.

The real hero was a brilliant young mathematician, Alan Turing, an unlikely hero if ever there was one. He was in poor health, nervous and introverted.

If you were thinking except for the name that sounds just like the original story. You would be right plus that other little oh-so conveniently ignored fact that Alan Turing was a closeted Gay man.

After the war ended Alan Turing who never had any recognition by the British Government committed suicide.

Sir Roger Casement was vilified by the government of the day. His diaries were used to stigmatise him as being Gay. He was stripped of his title and later hanged for treason.

Britain used evidence of the Irish patriot Sir Roger Casement's homosexuality to deflect an international outcry over his execution as a traitor 80 years ago, according to British cabinet papers released last year.

Casement, born in County Dublin to an Ulster Protestant family, was executed in August 1916 after being condemned for his efforts, at a time of war, to obtain aid from Germany immediately before the Easter Rising in Dublin.

Files released at the Public Records Office in London confirm suspicion about the importance attached by officials to details of Casement's secret life, which included picking up teenagers and young men in public places and paying them for sex.

To most Irish nationalists, he remains revered as a patriotic fighter for independence.

In a memorandum to the British cabinet a month before the execution, the Home Office legal adviser, Sir Ernley Blackwell, said it was difficult to imagine a worse case of high treason.

Blackwell wrote: "I see not the slightest objection to hanging Casement and afterwards giving as much publicity to the contents of his diary as decency permits, so that the public in America and elsewhere may know what sort of man they are inclined to make a martyr."

Some copies of extracts found their way into the hands of journalists, in an attempt to damage Casement's character that *The Times* denounced at the time as "irrelevant, improper and un-English".

Foreign Office records appear alongside copies of some of the entries to provide some corroboration. But the official desire to verify Casement's homosexuality went further, as the papers released disclose.

As late as 1969, the British government withheld information that Casement had been buried without a coffin because of concern that disclosure would inflame Irish public opinion.

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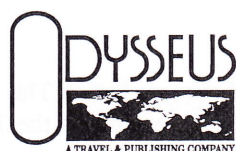
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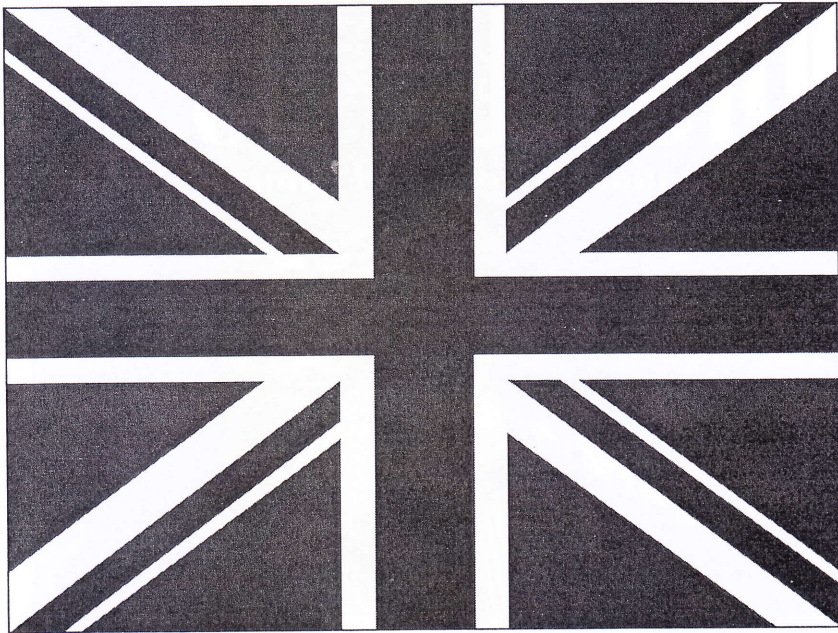
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GAY

in



the

UK

By Jeff Westward

The United Kingdom consists of Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England. Cornwall, too, if we're being really picky. But the Cornish gave up hopes of independence a long time ago, whereas Nationalism exists in all the others.

Generally, people don't care about your being gay so long as they don't have to see it. They're passively prejudiced, not active as in Biblical rants about Sodom et al. It's a bit harder in N. Ireland, 'cause it's so divided up on religious grounds to be-

gin with. People there can be a bit more active in their denunciations.

When I hear that folks in the US think the following—that in Germany, Italy, France, and most of Europe Gays are pretty much taken in stride and are incorporated fully and knowingly into the greater society I have to snort. Sounds like the 'it's shitty here so let's create a mythical nirvana' syndrome. We do that about Amsterdam, and that's equal hogwash.

Questions:

Do you or your friends find it necessary to conceal your sexual orientation?

A: Never. That's because I'm 'out' - not 'closeted' - as are all my lesbian/pals.

And family?

Sometimes families will react badly. More often, they cry and try to change you. Or, they treat it as a 'phase.' Some parents

and immediate family are wonderful, it is not an issue at all. I don't tell people, like cousins and aunts, it's none of their busi-

ness. Like, you wouldn't tell your mailman. Or would you? S'pose so, if he was a dish...

And employers?

Unless it's in a known 'gay-friendly' profession such as tv, radio, the media, hair-dressing - the answer is no. We have no protection. It is still legal for an employer

to dismiss an employee on the grounds of their being gay or HIV+ but this will change come the next election, when the Conservatives will be out of office and

Labour are elected. This is generally seen as a 'sure thing' - the Tories are out of vogue, and social compassion and justice are in.

Are Gays a generally recognised subgroup in Britain?

Yes. We have our pubs, clubs, magazines, and newspapers. Amazing gay scene, fabulous Pride 95 Weekend. We have increasingly positive representation in tv soaps (women more than men, actually - shock! Lesbian chic!!) and are not at all 'invisible.' General view is that all gay people

live in London. Hmmm as if. and we don't, generally, use the term 'Gays' - it's 'gay men' or lesbians/lesbian women' or 'bisexual m or f'... 'Gays' is a stultifying term, disconnecting us from our humanity, we feel.

NOTE: I say 'we' but I wouldn't dare pre-

sume to speak for the rainbow variety of British Queens.

'Queer' is a different kettle of fish altogether, being used for the same reasons as the US or Canada...

Must gay individuals take care to avoid physical or emotional abuse as a result of their orientation? Or do people tend to merely roll their eyes, say something vague about a 'poof' and then go about their business without much further regard?

Yes, we take care but not so as to be excessively paranoid, or concerned to a point of unhappy neurosis.

There is no law against lesbians, thanks to Queen Victoria refusing to believe they existed. However, laws of sexual abuse are used against them, and also their lack of protection in employment. In custody cases, the man often gets to keep the child. Lesbians are seen by men as 'sexy' and two women snogging (kissing) on the street are more likely to be sexually harassed than beaten up (as in a workman

shouting something akin to 'Look! Lezzies! Come here and try some man meat.

For gay men, whilst there are laws governing consent, kissing on the street can lead to an offence against Public Order (same with 2 women, actually), should a passer-by complain to the police. It is not a serious offence unless repeated, but more often than not no one bothers testing the law. We just make sure no one is looking or that we're in a big group.

They can't do anything about complaints

on a Pride March, for example.

Of course, gay men who 'flaunt' it (not my word, but that of the 'decency and morality brigade') are more likely to get queer-bashed, but the violent elements are a minority. Problem is, they hang around in big gangs. A queerbashing equation is 1 gay man to at least 5 hetero males. Cowards, and most good people do not condone or approve, and police in recent years treat such attacks as serious.

And the rest of Europe?

Holland is progressive, France is politically full of neo-Nazis like Jean Marie Le Pen, Spain is macho. Whilst all, on paper, are more progressive than the UK, in practice people are far more right wing on the public level. It's very strange, that. I'd say that the UK is the best in terms of day-to-day living as a gay male, despite our archaic laws and dusty politicians.

The archetypal English thugs are also, however, linked to the rise in racism and hooliganism in the UK and Europe. They are linked to other neo-Nazi groups such as the British National Party and Le Pen's bastard followers in France.

This problem, whilst serious, is small here next to the state of play in Europe. Europe's moves to the right are terrifying. Being an island has always helped us, and still does. We are fearful of the situation getting as big in the UK, but this is unlikely thanks to good old British reserve and the 'live and let live' stance of most folk.

The UK was one of the first nations to pass a law making homosexuality legal, in 1967 when our age of consent was set at 21. The age was lowered this year to 18,

whereas hetties are still at 16. The campaign continues. Labour are committed to an equal age and anti-discrimination laws. They promise the first UK Constitution, a Bill of Rights. They are likely to get in by a huge majority, such is the unpopularity of the right wing Conservatives. We're on pause, in a sense waiting.

Oh. And male rape was made a crime recognised in law and punishable to the same extent as female rape this year

Clause 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act was instigated by Thatcher herself as she sought to prevent 'the [purported] promotion of homosexuality in schools'. Its effect has been to silence reference to Gays in schools, and those teachers who counsel gay youth risk prosecution. So far, however, no one has been taken to court under the Act. It is vague, badly worded, and open to interpretations. Homosexuality can only be discussed in reference to diseases such as AIDS and not with any suggestion that such relations are natural, desirable, or loving.

Nasty, but it saw the outbreak of Queer Activism, united us, and saw both Stonewall and OutRage! form as campaigning

bodies, good stuff from bad, as they say.

We do have a national body - the Health Education Authority - funded by government that does AIDS and HIV work within the gay community. Never enough money, though, the old story, I know.

One more thing: gay bars are not shunted into ghettos here. For example, my fave bar is next to one of London's busiest train stations. Everyone knows what kind of bar it is, and no one cares. Apathy is public, prejudice is political.

The only out and out hypocrite here on the issue of Sodomites is the Right Raving Rev. Ian Paisley, and he's a sad political Northern Ireland leader who wants to keep it in the UK. Doesn't he know we screwed that country dry for over 500 years?

There's the occasional outburst of homophobic nonsense from an MP on the right, but that doesn't get much attention these days. And we now have two gay MPs, on both sides of the house. Labour's gay MP is in the Shadow Cabinet, and responsible for the Internet policies that are being shaped. No, I don't mean censorship, but productive stuff.

Hey, some of us lot are friendly, y'know!

SAFE SEX SUCKS

by *Wendell Ricketts*

“You are not at risk with passive oral sex. The active partner is at some risk. It is more risky to swallow semen. As far as we know, saliva does not transmit AIDS.”—U S Centres for Disease Control, AIDS information hotline

Although few AIDS educators will admit it, the safe-sex information with which they have been inundating the gay, lesbian, and bisexual community over the last decade has carried with it a fatal flaw. Even as doctors, researchers, health educators,

and activists have argued over what sexual practices do and don't belong on the “safe” list, virtually no one has been willing to talk to sexually active men and women about how to weigh conflicting medical information; evaluate the biases of their information sources; and learn to make sane, reasonable assessments of the personally acceptable risks to which their sexual practices may expose them. Instead, we've settled for a scattershot approach and for slogans like this one: Anyone can get AIDS.

Well, yes, anyone can. But not everyone is equally likely to.

The last year has brought a deluge of new and confusing safe-sex information — this time related to a reassessment of the dangers of cocksucking. As with every debate about safe-sex rules that has come before, people who need to know how to protect themselves from AIDS are getting more of what won't help (a torrent of personal conjecture and “expert” arguments over interpretation) and less of what will (

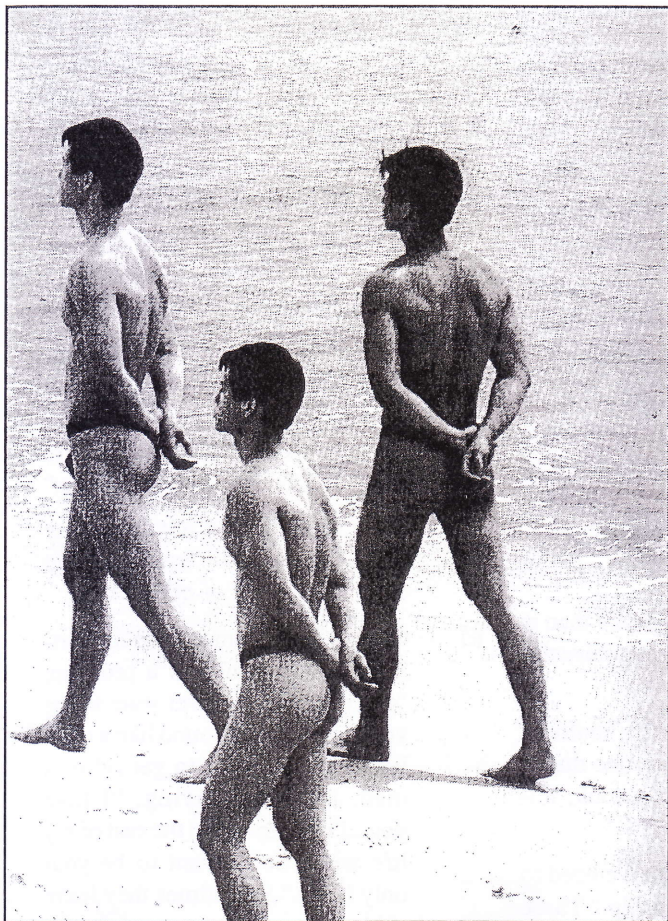
guidance in evaluating the available information and in using it to establish a personal hierarchy of risk).

Part of the problem, as always, is that scientific studies don't lead automatically to clarity about safer sex. In one widely reported piece of research, for example two men apparently seroconverted after they engaged in cocksucking in which they sometimes did and sometimes didn't take semen into their mouths.

Making this study somewhat difficult to interpret, however, is the fact that both men had gingivitis. In other words, they may have taken infected semen into their mouths at a time when their gums were bleeding. Their gum condition, then, provided a more efficient “portal” for HIV and increased the risk ù in their personal case ù of sucking cock. Yet the study has been used to argue that oral sex presents some greater general risk than experts had previously realised.

Here's another example of the ways in

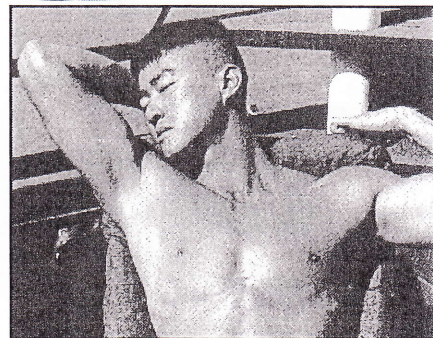
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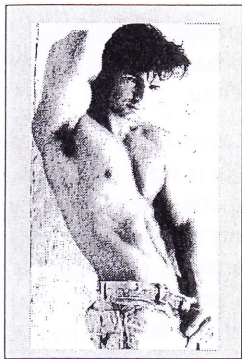
A view of what makes Gay men tick.

- ☑ Gays like to barbecue. Gays will cook if danger is involved.
- ☑ Gays who have pierced ears are better prepared for partnership. They've experienced pain and bought jewellery.
- ☑ If you buy your man or boyfriend a video camera, for the first few weeks he has it, lock the door when you go to the bathroom. Most early films end with a scream and a flush.
- ☑ Be careful of Gays who are bald and rich; the arrogance of "rich" usually cancels out the nice of "bald."
- ☑ Gays are very confident people. My man is so confident that when he watches sports on television, he thinks that if he concentrates he can help his team. If the team is in trouble, he coaches the players from our living room, and if they're really in trouble, I have to get off the phone in case they call him.
- ☑ Gays like phones with lots of buttons. It makes them feel important.

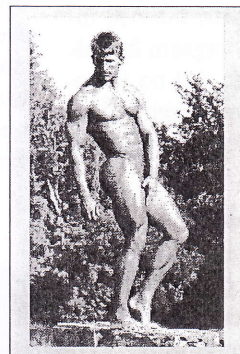
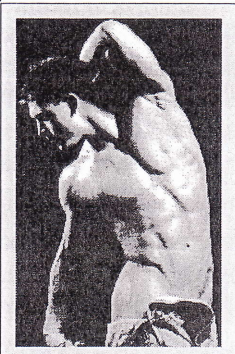
- ☑ Gays love to be the first to read the newspaper in the morning. Not being the first is upsetting to their psyches.
- ☑ All Gays look nerdy in black socks and sandals.
- ☑ The way a Gay man looks at himself in a mirror will tell you if he can ever care about anyone else.
- ☑ Don't try to teach Gays how to do anything in public. They can learn in private; in public they have to know.
- ☑ Gays who are going bald often wear baseball caps.
- ☑ A good place to meet a Gay man is at the cleaners. These Gays usually have jobs and bathe.
- ☑ Gays love watches with multiple functions. My man has one that is a combination address book, telescope and piano.
- ☑ All Gays hate to hear "We need to talk about our relationship." These seven words strike fear in the heart of even General Schwarzkopf.
- ☑ Gays are sensitive in strange ways. If a man has built a fire and the last log does not burn, he will take it personally.
- ☑ All Gays think that they're nice guys. Some of them are not. Contact us for a list of names.
- ☑ Gays have higher body temperatures than other men. If your heating goes out in winter, I recommend sleeping next to a Gay man.
- ☑ Most Gays love to shop. That's why the men's department is usually on the first floor of a store, two inches from the door.
- ☑ Gays would like monogamy better if it sounded less like monotony.
- ☑ If you're meeting a man who you think might be "Mr. Right," if he a) got older, b) got a new job, or c) visited a psychiatrist, you are in for a nasty surprise. The cocoon-to-butterfly theory only works on cocoons and butterflies.
- ☑ No man is charming all of the time. Even Cary Grant is on record saying he wished he could be Cary Grant.
- ☑ When four or more Gays get together, they talk about men.

- ☑ Most Gays are introspective: "Am I in love? Am I emotionally and creatively fulfilled?" Most other men are outrospective: "Did my team win? How's my car?"
- ☑ If he says, "I'll call you," and he doesn't, he didn't forget...he didn't lose your number...he didn't die. He just didn't want to call you.
- ☑ Gays hate to lose. I once beat my man at tennis. I asked him, "Are we going to have sex again?" He said, "Yes, but not with each other."
- ☑ Gays who can eat anything they want and not gain weight should do it out of sight of other Gays.
- ☑ Getting rid of a man without hurting his masculinity is a problem. "Get out" and "I never want to see you again" might sound like a challenge. If you want to get rid of a man, I suggest saying, "I love you...I want to spend the rest of my life with you...I want to be your only lover." Sometimes they leave skid marks.
- ☑ Gays accept compliments much better than other men do. Example: "Mitch, you look great." Mitch: "Thanks." On the other side: "Greg, you look great." Greg: "I do? Must be the lighting."
- ☑ Gays who listen to classical music tend not to spit.
- ☑ Gays are self-confident because they grow up identifying with super-heros.
- ☑ When a Gay man tries on clothing from his wardrobe that feels tight, he will assume the clothing has shrunk.
- ☑ If a Gay prepares dinner for you and the salad contains three or more types of lettuce, he is serious.
- ☑ Male menopause is a lot of fun. With Male menopause - you get to date young boys and ride motorcycles.

**All Gays
would still re-
ally like to
own a train
set.**

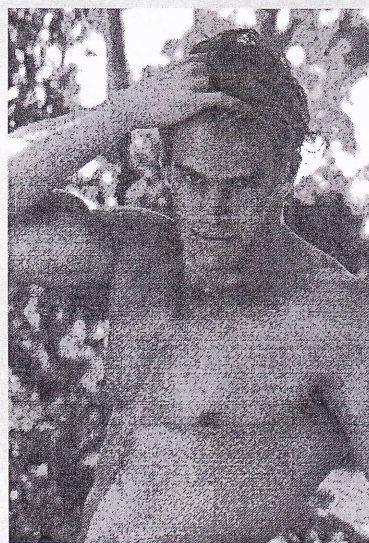


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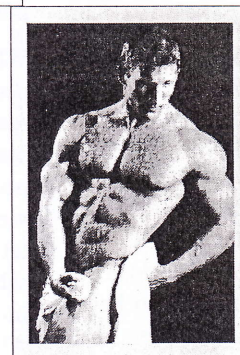


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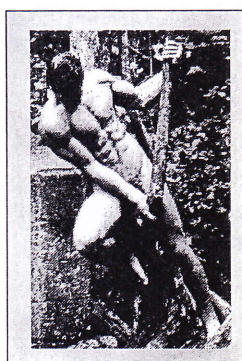


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which information about oral-sex risk is typically misused. Canadian doctor Joss De Wet announced in September 1994 that he had treated seven HIV- antibody-negative patients who had seroconverted ù even though their only sexual activity was cocksucking. "Oral sex," Dr. De Wet told reporters, "is not safe."

Unfortunately, there's no news here. No one ever said it was. Rather, the risk involved in cocksucking to orgasm has always been acknowledged, and no information has been discovered recently that throws doubt on our understanding of the degree of that risk.

If you are antibody-negative and your partners are antibody-negative, for instance, the risks of being infected with HIV through unprotected cocksucking ù even to the point of taking cum into your mouth ù are low. The risk decreases further if you only have one partner and if he, in turn, isn't having sex with anybody besides you (or sharing IV drug needles or receiving blood transfusions).

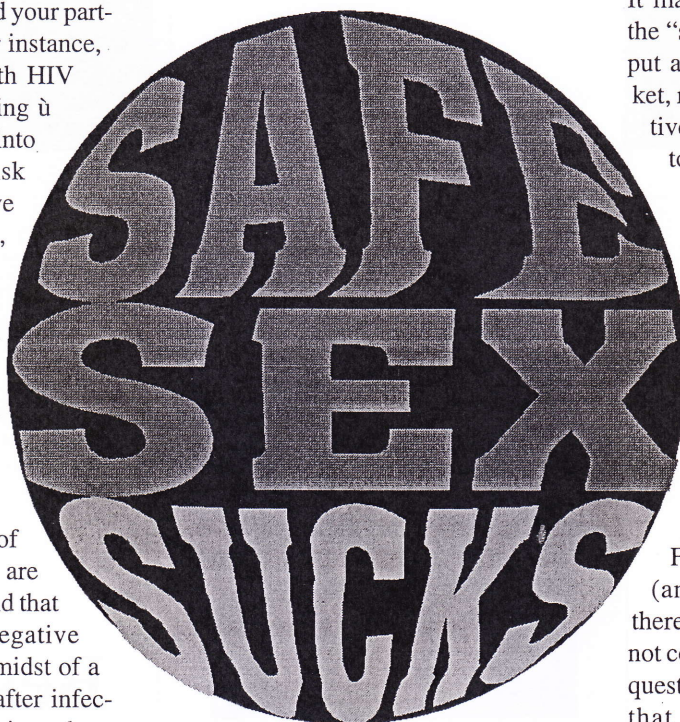
Obviously, however, if you base your behaviour on such beliefs, you make some major assumptions — including the assumption that HIV is the sole cause of AIDS, that HIV-antibody tests are always reliable (they're not), and that your presumably antibody-negative partners are not simply in the midst of a "latency" period (the months after infection before antibodies to the virus show up on tests). Maybe you can live with the degree of doubt inherent in such assumptions and maybe you can't.

If you are already HIV-antibody-positive, on the other hand, you may feel that it no longer matters whether you engage in sex that potentially re-exposes you to HIV. The danger of re-exposure to a new "dose" of HIV or to different strains is also being debated by doctors and researchers. But even leaving that issue aside, exposure to common sexually transmitted bacteria and viruses other than HIV isn't good for anyone — whether or not your immune system is compromised. Nonetheless, these are the kinds of decisions that sexually active HIV- antibody- positive people have to make.

Perhaps even more valuable than understanding the medical information, however, is recognising the reality that we live

in a world that is full of risks - even deadly ones. People who drive take a significant risk of being killed in a car accident. Cigarette smokers expose themselves to a wide range of debilitating and fatal diseases. We weigh and assess such risks as these ù and countless others ù as we go about our daily lives. And we accept them.

More than that, we understand that risk can be managed, moderated, and lived with. There is logic in the assertion that even the tiny risk of being killed in a plane crash (approximately one death per 50,000 passengers) increases if you fly twice weekly rather than only once a year ù although we accept the fact that every flight



poses some danger.

When it comes to AIDS, however, many people (including not a few medical professionals) behave as though "zero- risk" can be achieved or should even be expected. We've all heard the news interviews with terrified parents who refuse to let some kid with AIDS into their child's school because "even if there's only a one-in-a-billion chance that my son could catch AIDS from him, that's too much." If such parents really believed in protecting their children from anything that posed more than a "one in a billion" risks, they'd never even let them get on the school bus in the morning.

None of this is meant to trivialise the risk of contracting HIV or to encourage anyone to take that risk lightly. But it is essential to view our AIDS risk in the context of the innumerable, non- quantifiable risks that are inherent simply in being

alive — and to use that perspective to make rational, information-based decisions about our sexual behaviour.

For those who insist on zero AIDS risk, of course, no margin of error is small enough. In the sexual arena, that effectively means no sex, because absolutely safe sex requires avoiding all contact between potentially infectious body fluids and mucus membranes (such as the inside of the mouth or the lining of the rectum) and even the skin. No cum on my chest; I might have scratched the head off a pimple there. No kissing, because HIV has been detected in saliva. (HIV has also been found in breast milk, tears, urine, and vaginal fluid.)

It may also mean giving up our faith in the "safety" of condoms. Although we've put a lot of eggs into that particular basket, research confirms that condom effectiveness varies significantly from brand to brand. One study, in fact, reported that several popular condom brands, when subjected to simulated intercourse in the laboratory, leaked between 0.9% and 22.8% of the time. Condoms, in other words, pose a risk of HIV transmission even when they are used correctly. Yet AIDS educators continue to behave as though condoms were the Great White Hope of the safe-sex movement.

For those who realise that zero-risk sex (and zero-risk living) doesn't exist, there's only one completely accurate — if not completely reassuring — answer to the question Is it dangerous to suck cock? And that is: It depends. It depends upon whether the person whose cock you are sucking is HIV-antibody- positive or not. It depends upon how much your gums bleed when you brush your teeth. It depends upon what you make of the limited research that shows the presence of HIV viral material in precum. It depends upon whether your partner even produces precum. (Alfred Kinsey reported that one-third of the men in his research produced no precum at all, regardless of their age or level of arousal.) It depends upon whether you get cum in your mouth or not. And on and on.

At a symposium on AIDS in the Media held at the Wexner Centre at Columbus, Ohio in 1993, one panel member put safer-sex concerns into this context: "Avoiding HIV is not a sufficient purpose for my life," he said.

Although we have some information about the changes' people have made in their

sexual practices in light of AIDS, we know almost nothing about how individuals come to those decisions. It's conceivable, for example, that some men have elected to stop being butt-fucked, but have decided that their sex lives would suffer too greatly if they also had to give up cocksucking. So the pact they make with themselves is: "I'll suck cock if I want to, but I won't get cum in my mouth. And no more cocks up my ass."

Indeed, there's evidence that men are weighing their safer-sex options in precisely this way. In a phone interview, for example, Dr. Samuel noted that men were more likely to allow a partner to come in their mouths if that partner was HIV-antibody negative. These men, in other words, understood the danger of ingesting HIV-infected semen and took correct steps to avoid contact with it.

Such men need to be congratulated for having successfully negotiated the minefield of safe-sex information and for having come to decisions they can live with. What usually happens to them instead, however, is that they are made to feel guilty for not having engaged in "completely" safe sex.

Safer-sex campaigns, in fact - particularly

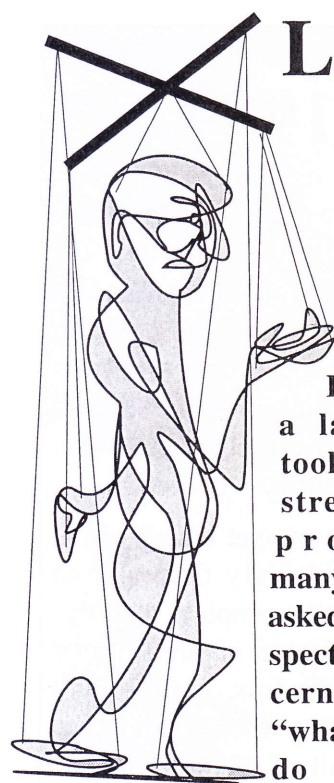
those directed toward younger people - trade in such slogans as "No orgasm is worth risking your life for." But the premise behind these educational efforts is false. First, we could just as accurately say "No trip down the street for a hamburger is worth risking your life for," but that would sound as ludicrous as it is. (Even though you could be run down in the road on your way there, be shot by a disgruntled police officer while you're eating, or choke to death on a piece of gristle.)

Far more insidious, however, is the subtle judgement inherent in such slogans: that sex is a shameful and trivial pursuit and that anyone who acknowledges and even elevates the importance of sex in his or her life is pathetic and deluded. If I decide to take up skydiving, for example, people might think I'm crazy. But no one would call me immoral, irresponsible, or decadent. If I choose to take my risks in the sexual arena, on the other hand, I am likely to be called all of those things - or worse.

What safer-sex advocates have largely forgotten is that sex serves an important, even indispensable function in people's lives. It brings with it affection, approval, recreation, relaxation, joy, and lots of other

good things that are part of what we might call the life force. For gay men, moreover, the symbolic significance of semen can hardly be overestimated. Not being able to take another man's cum into our bodies is not a trivial loss; and not being able to give our cum to someone else (or to "force" him to take it) wreaks havoc with what can be one of the hottest, most intimate interactions available through sex.

If we're going to take activities of any significance away from people, we have to replace them with something. But that is a task that safer-sex advocates have almost entirely abdicated. Rather, the best counsel they have to offer is that we "avoid" this or that activity or that we learn to "eroticize" condoms. There's no question that making personal decisions about AIDS and sex takes us into territory that most of us find difficult to navigate. Safer-sex decisions always involve the weighing of risks against benefits, the balancing of threats to physical and emotional health, and at least occasional forays into so-called "grey areas." The degree to which safer-sex advice fails to address these issues is the degree to which the people who need it most are being left to fend for themselves.



Lesbian puppets in Buenos Aires

By Alejandra Sarda

Last October, when Lesbianas a la Vista took to the streets to protest, many people asked - in a respectful, concerned way - "what rights do you lack?". Our next street event had to be about the rights we are denied.

"Lavender Tide", our art sub-group, suggested we use puppets. We designed and

made up the two puppets we used: a couple of tall, red mouthed, long haired (one red, one black), smiling lesbians. We found the music: a bolero with lyrics the 'we are more than just the two friends' and praising the joys of 'our special love.'

The place we decided on was San Telmo, a tourist-historical Buenos Aires area, usually crowded on sunny Sundays. Every group member was given the phone number of a lawyer who works for Lesbian/Gay groups. We saw many friends and groups who came to support us.

With the help of volunteers from Act Up y GLDC, a protective human barrier was formed, just in case the police arrived. And then we resorted to smiles, extended arms and a lot of assertiveness to stop the traffic.

Most people thought it was going to be a performance for children. But as soon as they heard the bolero's lyrics and saw the puppets - dancing and seducing each other,

no one could have any doubts as to what was happening: something 'queer' was taking place. As the dance ended with a passionate kiss, the truth was evident: these were two were Lesbian puppets.

More than 2,000 leaflets were distributed while the performance was repeated three times (with a growing attendance) and when it was over, only 4 or 5 leaflets were on the ground: everybody had taken them home.

The crowd reacted mostly with surprise, interest and respect; a few people were indifferent but nobody was aggressive.

Our two objectives - to bring Lesbian-created Lesbian images to the streets, for everyone to see; and to raise the public's awareness about the rights we are denied, as couples, were easily reached. With the sunset the performance ended and everyone danced in the street: puppets, Lesbians, Gays, mothers, teenagers ... and some of the crowd too.

Mardi Gras

The Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade is both a demonstration of civil rights and a celebration of gay and lesbian pride. It provides a forum for lesbian and gay individuals and groups to express their lifestyles, sexuality and community identity in a public way and in a way that is defined by them.

1978

Amid howls of 'Out of the bars and into the streets' 1,000 radical poofs and dykes on a pride march clash with police, making headlines - and history - as the creature that will become Mardi Gras is conceived in blood in 1978.

1980

At the Paddington Town Hall, 700 marchers from the 1980 Gay Solidarity Parade get on down at what is recognised as the first ever post-parade party - encouraged by police as a way of clearing the streets quickly. In an event since mirrored by history, k100 hopeful party animals miss out on tickets.

1983

The coalitionist religious group Anglican Lesbians and Gays creates a storm in the 1983 Parade. Members of Angay bear a paper mach effigy of Mary and the Bay Jesus. A sash around Mary's waist bears the legend: "Angays support lesbian Mums."

1984

A 6 foot-something tranny in platforms and a micro skirt finds herself accidentally leading the 1984 Parade up Oxford Street. The first float behind her has been held up by yobbos, but Roberta Perkins totters on oblivious. The crowd cheers; for a brief moment, she is the entire show.

A gigantic puppet effigy of the original Fat Ugly Queen from Hell, Divine, complete with rigging enabling a cigarette to be lifted to her lips, is definitely sighted being wheeled about the Royal Hall of Industries. The problem is, sources have some problems recalling whether the year was 1984 or 1985. Said one: "it's all a sort of blur...but it was definitely a magic moment!"

1988

With a bellow of engines eight Dykes on Bikes unleash the horsepower between their thighs and thunder up Oxford Street into history. It's their maiden voyage - the 1988 Parade.

10,000 revellers celebrating Mardi Gras 1988 in the Sydney Showgrounds' Government Pavillon are blasted back to reality by a blizzard. Giant wind machines blitz the crowd with paper snow, as DJ legend Stephen Allkins spins the party hit Stormy Weather.

Ten divas metamorphose into 10 Diana Rosses, leaping from elaborately created candles in a Chain Reaction celebrating 1988 - the tenth anniversary of Mardi Gras.

1989

Homophobes howl when nuns from the Order of Perpetual Indulgence deliver up the head of arch-bigot Reverend Fred Nile on a platter. Fred's head is borne triumphantly along the 1989 Parade route - complete with a tasteful accompaniment of paper mache fruits (though there's an apple, not a dildo, in his mouth).

1990

An overenthusiastic lad is a spontaneous hit at 1990's party when he climbs high girders in the Government Pavillon. The oblivious culprit is still boogieing ecstatically as the packed dance floor is evacuated. An hydraulic lift is trundled in - but by then he has climbed down.

1992

HIV Living is a front-page sensation in 1992. The HIV positive contingent, in skimpy outfits, adopt monikers like 'Betty Bactrim' and 'Nancy Pneumocystic'. Their mascot, an enormous, gaudily coloured Mexican skeleton, was created by brilliant artist and activist David Mediamid, who died of AIDS in 1995.

Lickable lesbians in lime green and fetchingly tight shorts tap-dance the 1992 Mardi Gras In[to] the Mood. President Richard Cobden, in his trademark lawyer's tux, gets stiffly funky to party classic This is It! but is typically upstaged by the dancing drag queens with whom he shares the stage.

1993

Those troopers who actually managed to keep it up all night at 1993's Mardi Gras Party are taken Somewhere Over the Rainbow by the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Choir, abetted by Julian 'Sticky Moments' Clary. There's serious lapse of cool as hard-core dance heads sing along, proving they know the words. People gush at complete strangers: 'I really love you!'

1994

Stolibollie, sweeties! It's Mardi Gras 1994! A gaggle of lanky lads in a sportscar are all frocked up as Joanna Lumley as Patsy (from the hit TV show Absolutely Fabulous). Miraculously, each slightly dishevelled blonde beehive maintains its "24 hours on a Stoli binge/just got shagged by 18 footballers" lean for the length of the route..

1995

At the 1995 party, Boy George appears in the Second Worst Kept Mardi Gras Secret. Over the Boy, the action is the Festhaus Dyke Bar - where a melee of lesbians pound the dance floor for hours.



fifi



Tells All...

Frustrated

Dear Fifi,

I am so very frustrated. Every time I go out to the clubs, I see this one special man. He is so attractive I can hardly stand to just look at him, I want to jump all over him. But he doesn't seem notice me. Can you tell me how to approach this boy? I see him every weekend, but I just don't have the nerve to say hello.

Un-Noticed

Dear Un,

You obviously think you are prettier than you are. I had this problem for many years when I was younger, but fortunately I persevered and found myself a husband who is far better looking than I am. Now I don't suggest that you hold out for "Mr. January." I had one thing guaranteed to catch me a major beefcake: a very large bank balance!

At least you don't seem to have the other problem I had at the same time which was an overwhelming appeal to men three times my age. And if it wasn't an octogenarian, it was some twit who flipped burgers at the local drive-in...both of which are about as appealing as a McSundae is to a McEskimo. (But I must say that nothing does feel as good as being pursued.)

You have several options. Get drunk - I never met a man I won't sleep with when I was so drunk I couldn't stand. I know from experience that his is the solution of choice for most men, and probably all that have had me... The obvious solution is to just plain lower your standards. This advice comes from a very close friend who

obviously has had lots of experience in the sport of big game hunting. And if nothing else works, you can always console yourself with the thought that this man you're after probably doesn't speak your language anyway.

Panty Men

Dear Fifi,

I see that AIDS Concern has finally produced safer sex information. Last weekend a gorgeously sexy drag queen stuck a flyer and condom in my pocket at some nightclub. When I got home and read it I learned some new facts about anal sex. I had no idea that only half the queer population fucked. Boy was I happy when I realised that all 213 men I've had this year knew exactly which orifice of mine to insert their dick into.

Where do those people at AIDS Concern get their data?

Fortunate

Dear Fortunate,

No one has yet figured out how AIDS Concern works, but I suppose if your 90% in the closet you'd have a much better idea than I. I admit I got a little chuckle out of the green flyer too. I mean really, I love to be pressured into anal sex. Pressure is what it's all about! Some one slap me a few good times!...or a whole bunch of times! I would like to know whose buns those are in photos though, they look an awful lot like my own...

Until next time, keep the condoms coming. And if you have any more scintillating questions, you can reach Fifi at Box 555 Contacts Magazine.

Disgruntled

Dear Miss "Sex Adviser"

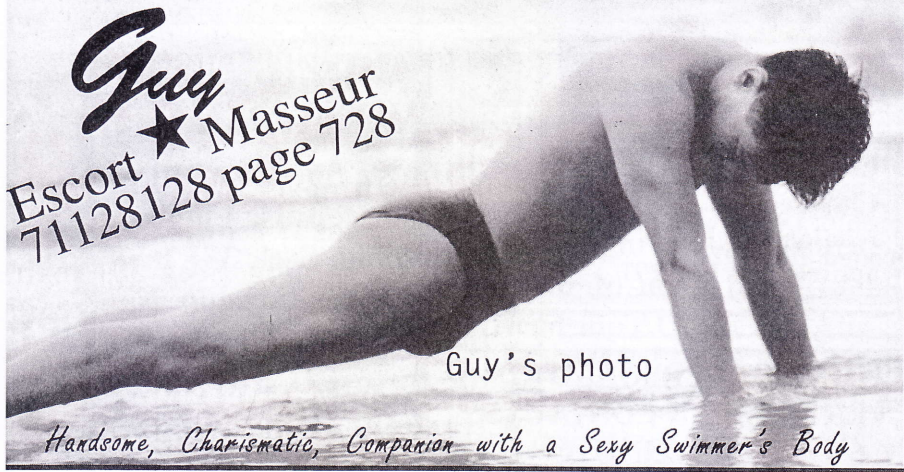
I take offence that you purport to be able to advise people on such a personal and varied topic of sex. I am flabbergasted by some of the suggestions that I have read in this magazine in the past six months to innocent people who write in honestly looking for advice and help. You insult your readers with your lack of sensitivity, and disrespectful attitude. I'm sure there are others able to assist our community to a far greater extent than you, and would like your editor to consider my letter a request to replace you.

Disgruntled,

Dear Disgruntled,

Sounds to me like you haven't been laid in a long long time? There's nothing that soothes sexual frustration like a good long session with me...I can show you what playing Doctor was meant to be like, and you obviously need plenty of care. For your information, I happen to have more letters after my name than any of the past 14 shrinks whose offices I have visited myself. You obviously haven't learned yet, but I should point out that you are in the enviable position of being one of Fifi's fan club charter members. If you sign up now, I'll give you an autographed copy of this issue of the magazine the next time you identify yourself at Club 97. Speaking of which, I should point out to my readers that I am live a Club 97 every third Friday autographing contacts magazines for my fans. It's always nice meeting my fans and having a chit chat with the public, so I hop you all get the chance to say hello sometime.

Guy
 Escort ★ Masseur
 71128128 page 728



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Queer Space

Why in the world do we let heteros into queer clubs? Who gives a f*** if they like us because we "really know how to party?" We have to in order to blow off the pressure they make us feel all the time! They make out wherever they please, and take up too much room on the dance floor doing ostentatious couples dances. They wear their heterosexuality like a "keep out" sign, or like a deed of ownership.

Why the hell do we tolerate them when they invade our space like it's their right? Why do we let them shove heterosexuality—a weapon their world wields against us — right in our faces in the few public spots where we can be relaxed with each other and not fear attack?

It's time to stop letting the straight people make all the rules. Let's start by posting this sign outside every Gay club and bar:

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Keep your display of affection (kissing, handholding, embracing) to a minimum. Your sexuality is unwanted and offensive to many here.



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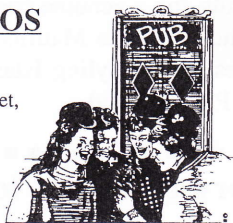
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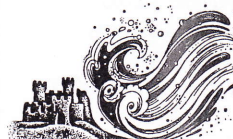
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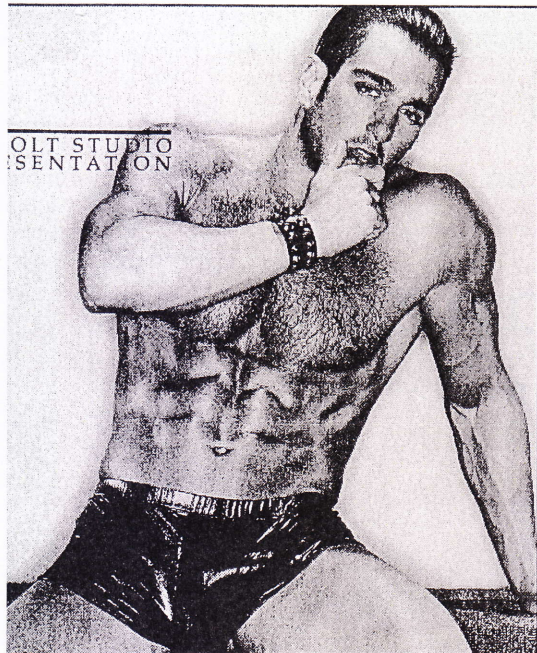
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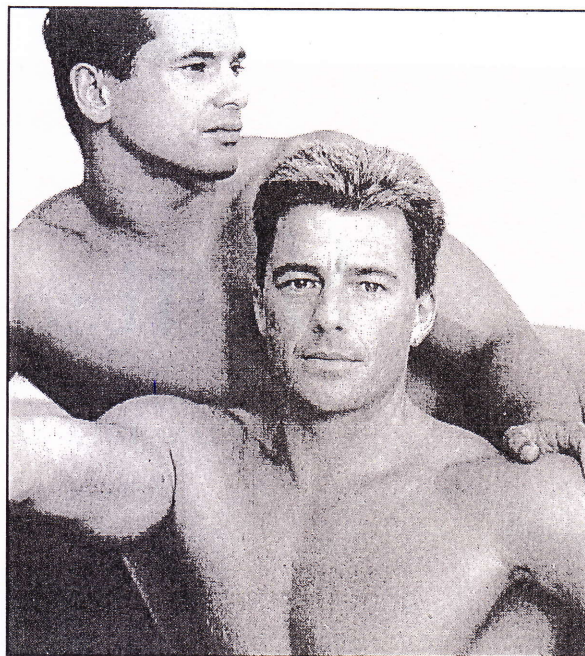


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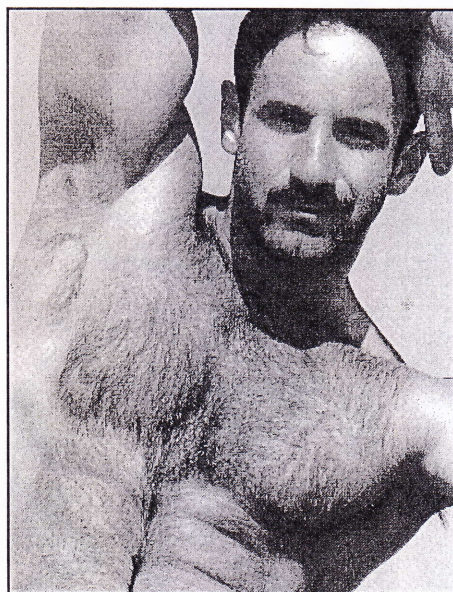
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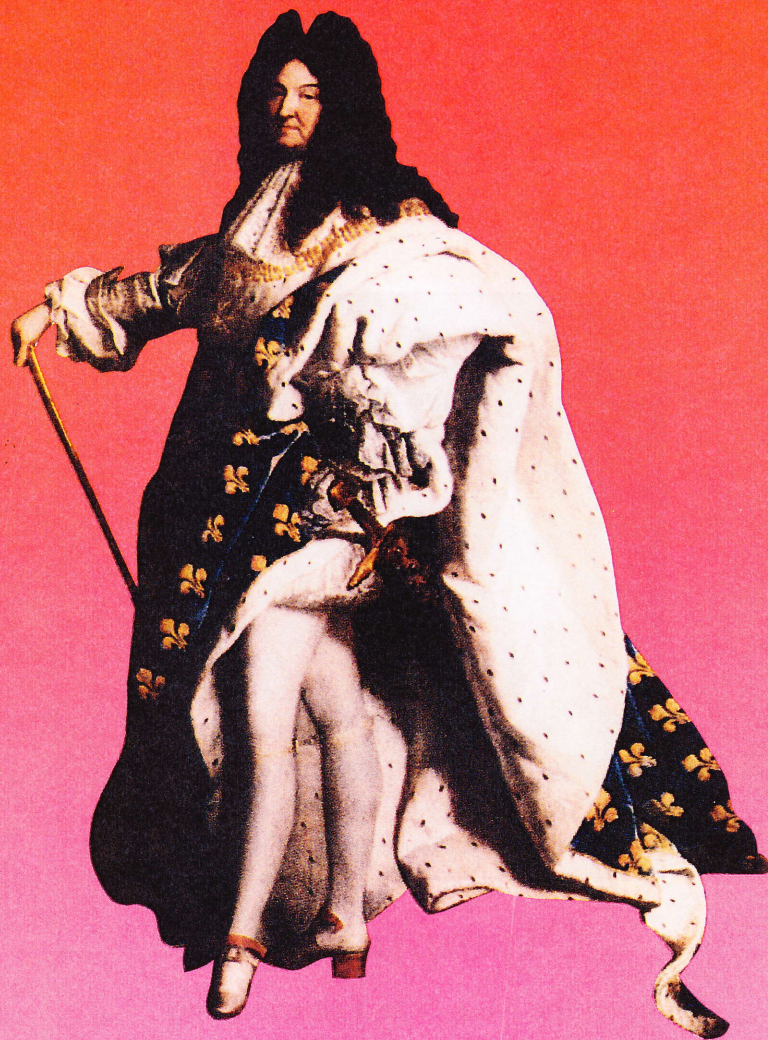
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